

NOTiCIAS DEL OSO

November 4, 2009

#2

Fall Tidings!

I am very impressed not only by the amount of response that I've gotten, but also the quality of the answers on the assessment. The answers gave me a great idea of where we're at as a campus, and the occasional laugh, as well.

This week, I'm posting short answers to the questions from the "Prior Knowledge Survey" and also debunking a couple of myths I encountered in the answers. There will be more elaborate answers in later editions. Next week, I plan to give you the first of many-to-come strategies for working with ELLs in your classrooms.

At the very end is my way of trying to personalize the newsletter. Each week, I'll feature a student to help you all put a face (and often a stand-out personality) with all the technical mumbo jumbo.

Have a great start to November!

Erin Van Sickle

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE SURVEY ANSWERS

1. Do you know which of your students are LEP? (If no, skip #2)

2. How many of your students are LEP?

No real right answer for these, I'll be checking in with each of you individually over the next month to make sure we're both aware of your students.

HOWEVER, I noticed a trend in some of the answers that needs to be addressed: **Just because you teach English or Reading does not mean that you do not have ELL students.** Over half of my students only attend one language arts class with me and are in a regular course for the other, so the odds are that you actually do have at least one ESL student in your classes. Unless you're an 8th grade English teacher, you all get a free pass on that answer.

3. Do you differentiate or modify your instruction already for your LEP students?

Again, no right answer here. I'll be helping all of you find new ways to connect with our LEP kids.

4. Do you know why students are in ESL classes and how they may be exited?

There's no short answer to this one, except to say that it's complicated. It is based on their scores from the TELPAS and the TAKS, as well as their grades overall. The LPAC makes a decision at the end of each year about whether or not to exit students based mainly on the standardized tests.

5. Are you familiar with what the TELPAS rating scores are and if so, could you draw conclusions about what type of work to expect from your LEP students?

I do not expect all of you to be pros at this yet. Somewhere around newsletter #4 or 5, it will be all about TELPAS scores and what it can tell general classroom teachers about the quality of work you should expect from a LEP student. For now, you just need to know that there are 4 possible scores in each section (Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing): Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced and Advanced High.

6. Are you aware of the new state requirements focused on preparing LEP students for the TELPAS writing selections?

Despite the fact that the law says it's about more

than the TELPAS, the new requirement for all courses (including math and science courses) to include writing in the curriculum is aimed at increasing the fluency of English Language Learners in all subjects, preparing them for the TELPAS, as well as for high school courses.

7. Should ELL students be allowed and encouraged to read and speak in their first language?

Yes, as long as it does not take away from classroom time devoted to learning concepts.

A continuing development of their first language is essential to the development of English. Imagine trying to understand sentence structure, prepositions, and even dangling modifiers in another language without first understanding it in English! Yikes.

It is a good idea to watch for crutch-like tendencies, but discuss any concerns with the student before taking any restrictive action.

8. Should LEP students be given different assignments because the course material is too hard?

This one is iffy and 100% subjective. It may have been a trick question on my part.

No and Yes, but only if they qualify as 'exempt'

If students are exempt because it is their 1st to 3rd year in the US, they will not have the vocabulary to complete all of the assignments. Still, it's our job to challenge them and see how high they can reach.

9. What resources or assistance should the ESL teacher be responsible for giving you and what should you obtain on your own?

As general education teachers, your main responsibility is to know which kiddos are and are not LEP. Eduphoria made ESL teachers happy, because now ALL teachers have a fancy column to tell them who is and is not LEP. If the student is LEP, they are either being served by me or their parents denied services.

I am responsible for TELPAS fun, helping you find solutions to language barriers, and educating the staff about the latest developments in ELL strategies/regulations. Hence, the newsletter. However, as many of you know, I personally also monitor each of my students in their other classes and if there's a problem you'll probably hear from me before you pick up the phone to call.

10. What do the following terms stand for:

LEP - Limited English Proficient

ESL - English as a Second Language

ELL - English Language Learner

Monitored Student - A student who has been exited in the past 2 years and is still being evaluated each 6 weeks by the LPAC.

LPAC - Language Proficiency Assessment Committee

Bonus Question: What does the title of this newsletter translate to (roughly) in English?

Bear News (roughly); News of the Bear (literally)

ESL Student of the Week



Name: Mario Martinez

Grade & Team: 6th - Explorers

First language: Spanish

Fun personality fact: Mario, though he chose not to smile for his picture, loves to offer his teachers and peers hugs.